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THE

# APPEAL TO PENNSYLVANIA.

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A

## SPEECH

BY

WILLIAM B. REED.

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DELIVERED

AT A MEETING OF THE FRIENDS OF

**BUCHANAN AND BRECKENRIDGE,**

AT SOMERSET, PA.,

SEPTEMBER 24, 1856.

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Chaplin

THE

APPEAL TO PENNSYLVANIA

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OF

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WILLIAM B. REED

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HUGHESMAN AND SONS

AT COLUMBIA, PA.

SEPTEMBER 21, 1894



# THE APPEAL TO PENNSYLVANIA

AND

# THE MIDDLE STATES.

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FELLOW CITIZENS :—I am here by your invitation to discuss, or rather to state my opinions, be they worth much or little, on the exciting topic of the day — the question, who, for the country's safety and advantage, ought to be President of the United States. I will do so calmly and considerately. Never, more than now, was it the duty of patriotic men not only to speak, but to think calmly on the future that is before us. Never, more than now, were declamation or appeals to passion or prejudice, or to mere local excitement, utterly inappropriate. If one-tenth of what is said on either side be true, we are on the edge of danger—and it is only the fool or coward that talks loudly and passionately in the face of actual, serious danger. I feel the peril of the crisis too sensibly to utter one word that may sound like bravado, or insult, or invective. It is your sober thought I seek to move. To do so, I must speak soberly.

I presume I am here among a majority of those who politically think with me. I can easily believe there are some within the sound of my voice who differ widely from me, and I am very sure that there are not a few, who, sincerely solicitous to do that which will most benefit the country, have not yet conclusively made up their minds which way their enlightened conscientiousness ultimately will lead them. In opportunities I have lately had, of varied and extended and promiscuous intercourse—nay, in my own city of Philadelphia, where no man can pretend to say whither the popular sentiment finally will tend, I am astonished to find how many undecided men there are; reflecting, considerate, conscientious men, who are asking themselves and their friends which way they shall go. Between the fierce arrays of fanatic and technical politicians—or rather as a hesitating reserve at a distance, is a very large body of neutrals, who will act and at last decide as reason and conscience dictate. With an earnest and impulsive temperament, with a quick and strong realization of our dangers and our duties, I and others may wonder that any one should doubt or hesitate—and should not see all this as plainly as we do, but the fact is as I state it. There may be many such here now, and to honest and inquiring men especially do I wish to speak. I ask their kind attention.



I have referred to Philadelphia and its sentiment. I think I can measure it accurately, for I have watched it closely, and it may not be uninteresting to describe it. If there ever was a spot in the United States more purely national, more utterly opposed to sectionalism, more loyally conservative of the Union and the Constitution, it is the ancient City of Philadelphia. And my belief is now, that if the people of Philadelphia could be, as I believe they will be, aroused to the reality of the dangerous sectionalism, the actual and active Abolitionism of what is called the Republican party, that no where will it receive a sterner rebuke. Its leaders and its newspapers will equally deserve it, for I have never seen a more thorough organization of mere leaders, or a more compact combination of newspapers. I have little doubt this will be the case before November. I have no doubt that the honest men who in Philadelphia support Mr. Fillmore, do so on national grounds, and that they cannot, unless some most expert legerdemain be practised, be brought to support a cause such as Mr. Fremont's is believed to be, of sectionalism and practical abolitionism.

Since the opening of this campaign Philadelphia has been sorely afflicted. I have in the course of my political life listened to, and I am sorry to remember, have spoken very extreme speeches on political questions—but never before have I known or heard such appeals to excited passion and prejudices as have lately characterised, so far as I can judge from the newspapers, the Republican Clubs and Councils in Philadelphia. No one would imagine it to be a subject of gravity and solemnity they were discussing. It is all exaggeration and violence and mischievous rhetoric—and Philadelphia men—sober, considerate, conservative men, meet night after night to listen and applaud bitter sectional harangues and violent denunciations, with no other aim than to disturb fair judgment and inflame evil passions. The poison of abolitionism has intoxicated the brain. I read these harangues with pain. I see them reproduced day after day in newspapers which claim to be moderate and conservative, and the public at a distance is made to believe that they meet with a response in the heart of Philadelphia. It is no such thing. There may be applause and enthusiasm at places called Republican clubs—but outside, our business men, our men of property and character shrink back from such passionate appeals. When Mr. Charles Sumner (of whom I desire to say no word of unkindness) appealed to foreign born citizens, and said that the governments and institutions of the Southern States were “*worse than any tyranny in Europe*,” considerate men in Philadelphia paused and asked if this were so—or was it only inflammatory rhetoric. When Mr. Thomas Williams, from Allegheny, who wonders I can be a Democrat, though he finds transition to Republicanism an easy thing—comes to Philadelphia and says that Southern Aristocracy—that of Virginia and South Carolina, the land of Washington and Marshall, and Middleton and Pinckney and Rutledge—is “*worse than the aristocracy of Europe*,” worse than Austrian, or Neapolitan, or Russian nobility;—when Mr. Anson Burlingame, of Boston, (the successor, alas! of such men as Winthrop and Elliot and William or Nathan Appleton, and that generous, noble-minded merchant, Abbot Lawrence) comes to Philadelphia and pours forth what I learn is stereotyped raving about providing *coffins for the South, and threatening to hang with Kentucky hemp our Southern brethren*, and refers indecently and cruelly to Mr. Buchanan's private life; \*—when the New York Tribune, speaking to its Philadelphia readers, slanders in the grossest terms the Chief Magistrate of the nation, applying to him words which I do not choose to repeat—(Tribune Editorial, Sept. 8, 1856);—when the

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\* Mr. Burlingame's offensive and scurrilous speech, delivered in Philadelphia in August, and reported in the papers of that city, and again in Germantown, was delivered at least a third time at Newark on the 11th September, and will be found *verbatim* in the New York Tribune of Friday, 12th.



same paper of the 10th of September, contains an expression of a wish of a foreign correspondent, that the Union be dissolved—as most conducive to the cause of freedom abroad. I say, when all this is done and said in moderate, conservative Philadelphia, it produces and it has produced reaction and disgust—and I repeat it, the quiet, orderly citizens of Philadelphia are deeply pained at such exhibitions. They ask, and I ask, how can any cause be good that is thus sustained and thus advocated?

That it is no assumption—that Mr. Buchanan is the most congenial candidate to national men—that his election is essential not merely to the safety, but what is nearly as important the tranquility of the Union, it is my object to show. That the rich man who desires to preserve public credit as the basis of all private security—that the poor man who works hard for his wages, and the sustenance and education of his family, will feel and be safer if Mr. Buchanan is elected than if Mr. Fremont should be, let me try to demonstrate.

A great deal has been said and written about “PLATFORMS”—a figurative word of very recent coinage—and a word which is doing an infinite deal of harm. Many a one thinks there is some mysterious element of evil in the Cincinnati *platform*, simply because it is called a “platform,”—who when he is asked the direct question, (I have met many such,) what the platform is, and what exact principles it embodies, know nothing about it and cannot answer the question. It is hardly necessary to say that the question of the extent of the power of Congress over the territories in relation to slavery, and the propriety of its exercise is one of the most delicate and difficult that has ever arisen, about which the wisest and most patriotic men have differed and differ still—and which at this moment in one of its forms is now before the Supreme Court of the United States for decision. Light-minded men talk about it as if it were the simplest and clearest thing imaginable. Yet the very Missouri Compromise line, about which so much is said, has been pronounced absolutely unconstitutional by James Madison, thirty-seven years ago; and William C. Rives of Virginia, a year ago; and by John M. Clayton, in his place in the Senate, within the last month; and was earnestly resisted by the north at the time of its adoption. Mr. Clayton’s language is so clear and precise that for the benefit of some friends who have, as I have, great regard for him I will quote it—which I do from a revised report of his speech in the National Intelligencer.

MR. CLAYTON.—I say under these circumstances, that I think my friends from the north, might well entertain charity for a difference of opinion on this question of constitutionality. All I ask, is that the same honesty of purpose which I concede to them shall be granted to me. They entertain the opinion that this act was constitutional. I entertain the opinion that it is unconstitutional; and in consequence of that, I declared my fixed purpose long ago, never to vote for the restoration of the line. I believe that Mr. Jefferson was sincere when he said of it, that it sounded on his ear like a fire-bell in the night, drawing as it did a geographical line between the sections of the Union, and thus necessarily dividing them.” He then went on to say: “We come, then, to the point which Mr. Madison stated. Will any man contend that you have the power to prohibit a State, when it comes into the Union, from establishing or prohibiting slavery as it pleases? Every senator agrees that Virginia could become free to-morrow, or Pennsylvania a slave State to-morrow. Nobody denies this. Then what mere folly would it have been in the framers of the Constitution to have intended to authorize Congress to prohibit slavery in a Territory and not in a State; in other words to have allowed the power to prohibit slavery while the Territory was in the act of transition to a State government, and to have denied the same power the moment after the formation and admission of the State! The ridiculousness of the position, if I may use that word without offence to any body, would be apparent in the fact, that if Congress were to exclude Kansas, asking admission here with a slave-holding constitution, Kansas might immediately afterwards strike out the clause about slavery, obtain admission; and then call a convention and admit slavery. Nobody denies this.

I do not feel the necessity of urging additional arguments on the subject, especially after what has been said by Mr. Madison. I do hold and believe firmly that the compromise line of 1820, however great may have been the wisdom of those who adopted it under the extraordinary exigencies of the occasion, was an unconstitutional provision.”



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Now remember, these are not the words of the Cincinnati platform—or of Mr. Buchanan, or of his partisans, but of the Whig Senator, John M. Clayton, and for his opinions he asks and we ask “charity” from our northern friends who think differently. I express no opinion of my own on a question about which wiser men than I, have differed and are differing still—but I refer to it as illustrative of the unmeaning cry which is raised about the supposed heresy of this part of the Cincinnati platform, of which half the people who make this outcry know as little as I fear they do of their catechism. I am not one of those who take my notions of constitutional law from any political convention—Whig or Democratic, as of binding authority—nor, as I understand it, does Mr. Buchanan. “I accept the resolutions,” says he in his letter of acceptance “in the same spirit in which I accept the nomination.” I regard them, he may be understood to say, as the opinions of the friends and party who desire my election, and as such, subject to the Constitution as interpreted or to be interpreted by the Supreme Court of the United States, I shall respect them.

Let me not for one moment be understood as suggesting evasion or equivocation. Nothing is farther from my mind. I mean to assert simply this, that what is in the Cincinnati resolutions, is not generally understood with precision, by those who have seized it as an injurious catchword, that if it is understood with accuracy it only asserts principles which many a fair minded man, North and South, Whig and Democrat, have inoffensively held long ago before this pestilent agitation for party purposes began—and that Mr. Buchanan accepts it with no surrender of his sense of his higher obligation to obey and execute the Constitution as interpreted by proper authority.

Let me put a proposition. Suppose after Mr. Fremont is elected President, the Supreme Court shall determine, as they may, for the case is now before them for decision, that the Missouri Compromise is absolutely from the beginning unconstitutional and void, or that it was by implication or expressly abrogated in 1850—for I don't now speak of the act of 1854. Suppose they further determine as they may, that Congress has no power to divest the right of a man to a slave in a territory, whether Kansas, or New Mexico, or Utah, north or south of  $36^{\circ} 30'$ . Suppose, I mean, that before this political excitement began, before Topeka or the Shawnee Mission were heard of, an emigrant family from Virginia or Kentucky, had with their slaves settled in the Territory, and the Supreme Court should say, no Congressional act could divest his right to them. Suppose they further say, that a territorial population of sufficient number and actual residents, have a right to form a constitution with or without slavery as they see fit and the admission by Congress is valid. Suppose all this to be so decided, and settled to be law by competent authority, must not—nay will not Mr. Fremont thus administer and execute the law and the constitution? To suppose he would not is to suppose him even more faithless to constitutional duty, than some of his friends are proud to be. And yet every one of these hypothetical and probable results is the recognition of the very principles which are supposed to make the Cincinnati platform so objectionable. You will find them there. Just then, as Mr. Fremont would submit to these, to him, offensive doctrines, if properly and authoritatively ascertained, so does Mr. Buchanan accept them. He cannot, if he would, by any executive act make them more or less constitutional. If they prove to be so, it is his duty so to receive them. If they do not, it is as clearly his duty to disregard them. And so ends in my opinion this stupendous phantom which has frightened and is frightening still so many honest but unreflecting people. So much for the value and efficacy of a platform assuming it to be wrong.

But I really am not prepared to admit that it is. I now speak of the platform strictly and its reference to the territorial question. I do not speak of the laws that may have been passed by this territorial legislature or that. The Cincinnati reso-



lutions, be it remembered, gave no approval to them. Neither Mr. Buchanan nor his party in Pennsylvania have ever approved of them, and I will undertake to say that if any gentlemen will ask him what he thinks of those laws, he will tell him very frankly that with a majority of the Senate, as was shown in the passage of Mr. Toomb's amended bill, he thinks they are very bad and ought to be abrogated. He might possibly add that if these bad laws continue in force, it is because the republican House of Representatives neglected, or for factious purposes refused to act upon the Senate bill.

That this is so, no one disputes. The Senate bill for the pacification of Kansas, contained an express provision abrogating these laws and this Senate bill, in order to keep alive this mischievous excitement, the House of Representatives refused to consider. Let me, in this connection, call attention to a portion of the debate on the very subject which I find in the National Intelligencer of last week, (September 13.) It is a dialogue between a republican and a conservative Senator; Mr. Seward and Mr. Crittenden. Mark it, fellow citizens, when you are told that Kansas is asking for relief, see why she does not get it.

“Mr. CRITTENDEN. Then I am right. The Senator will accept of nothing, no legislative provision giving relief to Kansas, but the Topeka constitution.

Mr. SEWARD. None that is proposed.

Mr. CRITTENDEN. Can the gentleman speak of any other that I may offer.

Mr. SEWARD. The one which I have offered.

Mr. CRITTENDEN. Is there anything else?

Mr. SEWARD. No, sir.

Mr. CRITTENDEN. Then he stands upon the position that nothing else is acceptable but the admission of Kansas as a State with her Topeka constitution. Now, sir, we have heard a great deal from that gentleman and others about the crime against Kansas. They say that the people are oppressed; the people are conquered; the people are subjugated by the ‘border ruffians;’ their rights despised and trampled upon: and, to fill up the picture, we have been told that murder, rapine, and arson exist in Kansas; and I have no doubt they do exist there; but this picture, which gentlemen present of the state of things there, is somewhat greater than I have permitted myself to believe. But, notwithstanding all this murder, all this rapine, and all these named and nameless crimes, gentlemen will accept of no measure of redress or remedy unless it be accompanied, or unless it be in the form of the admission of Kansas with the Topeka constitution. Why have our sympathies and our feelings been assailed with all this eloquence upon the subject of the actual distress, actual crime, and actual imprisonment of freemen there if they are to have no redress at our hands at all? The redress of those grievances and the question of slavery are entirely distinct things. Will we not remedy these grievances which now afflict the people of Kansas? Will we not stay the hand of the oppressor, the hand of the murderer? We hear complaints of the invasion of these ‘ruffians;’ will you not stay that by any measure because you would not have the Topeka constitution as the constitution of the State? Sir, such a position, in my view of the subject, is equivalent to the denial of any relief for those people now. How unreasonable, then, it is to ask for the acceptance of the Topeka constitution, which was made without color of law, made without form of law, made professedly and notoriously by a portion of the people, while another portion of them were so hostile to the proceeding of making a constitution at all that they surrounded the ballot-box and at one place of voting destroyed it. Is there any justice in such a measure as the admission of Kansas as a State on that constitution? Is there any precedent or principle by which I may agree to vote for the adoption of such a constitution? Why, sir, talk about the unjust laws that were passed by the Legislature of Kansas! Is any one of them more unjust than to fasten an irrepealable



constitution upon one-half of the people by the votes of the other half, without their consent and without their concurrence or co-operation in the making of it? Suppose that those who made this constitution were the majority of the people, had not the minority a right to say something in regard to it; and might not that minority have influenced somewhat the making of that constitution? It was the work of a faction there. I confess to gentlemen that the proposition to admit Kansas into the Union on that constitution appears to me to be an outrage—an outrage upon the people of Kansas; and, so far from being a measure of peace it would be one of discord.”

And it was in this same speech, that Mr. Crittenden used these other words of wisdom, which we of the North will do well to think of.

“Gentleman of the North think that the South desire to extend slavery; that that is a predominant feeling in their hearts. Gentlemen, I can say to you in great sincerity that you are entirely mistaken on that point. That is not the anxiety of the South. *It does not occupy the thoughts of one man out of ten thousand half a day in the year.*

I will tell you what is the anxiety of the South: that our fellow-citizens consider it as a reproach against the South, that they hold slaves; that the North desires to refuse to them their equal and common participation in the enjoyment and settlement of the public land of the United States, which they regard as a common right and the inheritance of all; and that it is an incident of that common right for them to go there with their slaves, as you go there with your property. This they consider to be right and equitable. If you and I own a tract of land, and you dislike slavery, and I am free to have it, can you complain that I have slaves to cultivate my part of it, while you prefer white labor for yours? You will have no right to complain. But I do not intend to argue any question upon this subject. This Union is not a thing easily dissolved; but I grant you it may be worn into, as they say constant attrition wears away a rock. But I do not believe the attrition is to go on. I believe in the intelligence of the people of every quarter of this Union. Instead of exaggerating this question of slavery in Kansas, and considering it as a question which will dissolve the Union, if a man will sit down, divest himself of all excitement on the subject, and just look at it, and ask himself of what consequence is it to me, and to this great republic of thirty-one States, soon to be many more, whether Kansas is admitted as a free State or as a slave State, in that point of view, it is a question of much less importance than we regard it, or as it regards any national interest.”

But the platform has nothing to do with the Kansas territorial laws. The Kansas-Nebraska Bill has nothing to do with these laws. Let us see what the platform really is, fairly considered. It is not very new, certainly, and not altogether original with its creators. I think I can trace the germ of it to high authority, and if my Whig friends, who have turned Republicans, find that something very like this Cincinnati doctrine had its origin in the capacious mind of Henry Clay, so much the worse for them, and so much the better for me.

I supposed the case, just now, of a Southern family emigrating to a territory—Kansas, for example, or anywhere else—and taking with them and claiming to keep their household servants, whom we and they call slaves—and this before any organic territorial law is passed by Congress. Ought Congress, against their will, to take their family's property, and set them free, to fly—or starve—or steal, the usual function of negroes who are forcibly or stealthily emancipated? Ought Congress to do this?

The Abolitionist says yes, and I understand his motives and his mode of reasoning. The Cincinnati platform in so many words says no—saying, as I understand



it, not that it is unconstitutional, but these are the very words, that "it is the only safe solution of the slavery question for Congress not to interfere with slaves in States or territories." Congress ought not to interfere with slaves, or where slavery actually or accidentally exists. Now, this is all, literally all, the Cincinnati resolution says; and, although this is called heresy, and novelty, and enormity, when Mr. Buchanan accepts it, it is exactly the same doctrine as to places where slavery does exist almost *ipsissimis verbis*, which, eighteen years ago, Henry Clay enunciated, and advocated, and passed through the Senate of the United States. "Non-interference with slavery" is the language at Cincinnati. Now, it so happened, that on the 10th of January, 1838, the Senate of the United States, by a vote of 36 to 8—four to one—adopted this resolution:—

"*Resolved*, That any attempt by Congress to abolish slavery in any territory of the United States in which it exists, would create serious alarm and just apprehension in the States sustaining that domestic institution, and would be a violation of good faith towards the inhabitants of any such territory who have been permitted to settle with and hold slaves therein; because the people of such territory have not asked for the abolition of slavery therein, and because, when any such territory shall be admitted into the Union as a State, the people thereof shall be entitled to decide that question exclusively for themselves."

Mark these words, identical with the non-interference with slaves in territories in the Cincinnati resolution, and then mark that the resolution thus adopted was suggested and drawn by Henry Clay, modified by James Buchanan, and advocated and carried by their joint exertions. The record stands thus:—

"Mr. Calhoun's fifth resolution being under consideration, the question being on an amendment offered as a substitute by Mr. Clay, was discussed to a late hour, and finally adopted as modified by Mr. Buchanan by a vote of 24 to 13. The question was then taken on the adoption of the resolution as amended, and passed by a vote of 36 to 8."—(*Congressional Globe*, 1837-8, p. 91.)

If one human being was held in slavery in any territory, Kansas or anywhere else, when it became a territory of the United States, then, said this resolution of Mr. Clay, it is a wrong and violation of faith to the South to touch the subject by legislation. And this, I repeat, is all the Cincinnati resolution says—non-interference by abolition—non-interference by prohibition—non-interference any how—not that Congress *cannot* do it, but that Congress *ought not* to do it. But it may be said, and it has been said, this resolution of 1838 only refers to abolition of slavery in a territory where it does exist, such as Florida, and not to prohibition in a territory where it does not exist. Fellow-citizens, Mr. Clay, later in life, went still further. The second of his celebrated compromise resolutions of February, 1850, was this:—

"*Resolved*, That as slavery does not exist by law, and is not likely to be introduced into any of the territory acquired by the United States from the Republic of Mexico, it is inexpedient for Congress to provide by law either for its introduction into or exclusion from any part of the said territory; and that appropriate territorial governments ought to be established by Congress in all of the said territory without the adoption of any restriction or condition on the subject of slavery." And in his speech, in general reply, on the 21st May, 1850, Mr. Clay used these words:—

"I will close this part of what I have to say by grouping, comparing, and contrasting the features of the respective plans of the Executive and the committee, which I shall be glad if the reporters will publish in parallel columns:—

He (the President) proposes non-intervention as to slavery.	We (the committee) also propose non-intervention as to slavery.
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And the Cincinnati platform, so much reviled and so little understood, also proposes

#### NON-INTERVENTION BY CONGRESS AS TO SLAVERY IN THE TERRITORIES.

Such is this platform, fairly considered. There is in it not one word about the



propagation of slavery—and any imputation that there is, is a gross injustice and a clear perversion of language.

Now, all I ask, even from those who judge this platform differently from me, is fair play to Mr. Buchanan, who, as I have shown, accepts it as he accepted the nomination, and as I am bound to presume Mr. Fremont accepted his platform and his nomination, subject to the higher law of the actual constitution. I am not willing to believe for one moment, that any candidate or any party means to elevate these convention platforms to a level with the constitution.

But, I repeat, I ask fair play for Mr. Buchanan. I ask that he be judged by his own acts and his own measured and well-considered words—and I undertake to show to all candid and fair men, that on this hateful topic of slavery—for such in its prostitution to party uses I do not hesitate to call it—Mr. Buchanan has occupied but one attitude—and that of a moderate and consistent and conservative statesman—and that there has been no change in his position from first to last. His precept to the country has been repression and rebuke of slavery or anti-slavery agitation—Moderation—Repose.

Let me by way of beginning—though it looks like beginning at the end—ask your attention to a single paragraph in what Mr. Van Buren well calls Mr. Buchanan's "admirable letter of acceptance," which may be fairly regarded as well-considered words. I do not think more practical wisdom with reference to slavery and slavery agitation ever was uttered. I certainly find nothing like it in the stimulating, exasperating harangues of Republican orators. I quote the very words, and I beg attention to each of them :

"Most happy would it be for the country if this long agitation were at an end. During its whole progress it has produced no practical good to any human being, while it has been the source of great and disastrous evils. It has alienated and estranged one portion of the Union from the other, and has even seriously threatened its very existence. To my own personal knowledge, it has produced the impression among foreign nations that our great and glorious confederacy is in constant danger of dissolution. This does us serious injury, because acknowledged power and stability always command respect among nations and are among the best securities against unjust aggression and in favor of the maintenance of honorable peace. I most cheerfully pledge myself, should the nomination of the Convention be ratified by the people, that all the power and influence constitutionally possessed by the Executive, shall be exerted, in a firm but conciliatory spirit, during the single term I shall remain in office, to restore the same harmony among the sister States which prevailed before this apple of discord, in the form of slavery agitation, had been cast into their midst. Let the members of the family abstain from intermeddling with the exclusive domestic concerns of each other, and cordially unite; on the basis of perfect equality among themselves, in promoting the great national objects of common interest to all, and the good work will be instantly accomplished."

Now, it will be observed that the leading idea here is Repose—Repression by wise counsel, of sectional agitation, a putting an end once and forever, as far as it is in the power of man to restrain passion and fanaticism—to slavery disturbance—the aggressions of the South, if there be any—the fanaticism, the obtrusive fanaticism of the North, such as there certainly is.

This is no new idea—no sudden inspiration. It is the natural tendency of a mind trained in the conservative and constitutional doctrine which the great Middle States profess—those who first adopted and have most loyally sustained the Constitution of the Union—for it may have escaped recollection that the first State of the Old Thirteen that ratified the Constitution, was Delaware—the next Pennsylvania—and the next New Jersey. The State of New York, where Mr. Fremont lives and moves and has his sustenance—and where the Tribune and the Herald (the Fanatic and Satanic Press, as they call each other) decide what the Constitution is—was rather dilatory in coming into this Union, being the *eleventh* in order, though Alexander Hamilton and John Jay were there to urge with their eloquence the great work on.



In the false excitement which agitators have succeeded in arousing, no one has taken the trouble to refer to Mr. Buchanan's recorded career on this subject of domestic slavery—and I feel it to be a duty as a friend and as a citizen of Pennsylvania, to step forward, to show what—how consistent and conservative—that career has been. The retrospect is impressive and instructive.

When Mr. Buchanan was first in Congress as a member of the House of Representatives, there was a happy exemption from slavery or anti-slavery agitation. Before 1835 there was really very little to disturb the public mind on that subject, it being engrossed by other questions, the currency, and those which may properly be called "political" questions. It seemed as if the excitement as to slavery had culminated at the Missouri question, and when this was settled, took its period of repose. In 1835 it broke out afresh, in the form of petitions, generally praying for what was then deemed quite as important as the territorial question is now, the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia.

Mr. Buchanan took his seat in the Senate of the United States, if I mistake not, in the month of January, 1835, and I beg to call attention to what began, and through his agency, as I think, was happily terminated during the first session of his service as a Senator.

Perhaps never was agitation more summarily and more happily disposed of than this was in the Senate of the United States. Of course, I do not claim for Mr. Buchanan any merit that is derogatory to the eminent men with whom he was associated, but the record shows that he was largely instrumental in bringing about the result which was attained with perfect contentment (strange as it may now seem), to the North and the South. Mr. Buchanan was certainly then able to do what he now promises to do, repress the slavery agitation. Let me, with your kind permission, show this. I refer to it in detail.

It has been matter of reproach to Mr. Buchanan, and to me, as one of the humblest of his supporters, that there has been a departure from the ground attributed to us both at the time of the Missouri agitation. One of the Abolition orators has quoted my words in a book of history, in which I said that the resolutions of the Legislature of Pennsylvania in the year 1819 embodied the spirit of the act of 1780. I cannot speak for Mr. Buchanan, but for myself I can say that, had I been a grown man in 1819, when the resolutions referred to were passed, I should probably have sustained them; but it must be borne distinctly in mind that the resolutions of 1819 assumed a ground which is now, by common consent, relinquished and abandoned, that Congress, in the admission of a State, has a right to impose an absolute restriction on the new State with regard to slavery. The very persons who now quote the resolutions of 1819 would not pretend themselves that they are sound constitutional law, now. No one now presumes to say that Congress can impose such restriction upon a State claiming admission with a republican constitution. The principles of the resolutions of 1819, so far as they embodied constitutional doctrines, are as dead as the Bank of the United States. They died when Congress rejected the Missouri restriction. The Missouri Compromise line killed them. It is quite immaterial whether the repudiated principles of these resolutions were at that time held by me or any one else. I neither know nor care whether they were held by Mr. Buchanan.

Let me now return to the session of Congress for the year 1835. Mr. Buchanan, as I have said, took his seat in January of that year. The President of the United States, Mr. Van Buren, who neither then nor now is supposed to be extreme in his sympathies with the South, who occupies at this moment ground of reserve with respect to slavery and slavery extension, and whose letter in favor of Mr. Buchanan, in my poor judgment, is the most impressive and persuasive I have yet seen, had, in his annual message, called the attention of Congress to the incendiary publications which Northern Abolitionists were circulating in the South. The subject



naturally excited Southern Senators of all parties. During this excitement, petitions were presented to the Senate asking for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. They were met by a motion of Mr. Calhoun, that the petitions themselves should be, on the spot, rejected. In this he was supported by more than one Southern Senator, and it would be interesting to see how earnest and how honest was the feeling which existed in the minds of gentlemen supposed to be much more moderate than Mr. Calhoun. On the 7th of January, 1836, whilst these petitions were under consideration, Mr. Buchanan first opened his lips upon the subject. His words are so temperate, yet so earnest, that I cannot refrain from giving them to you, and I desire that you will observe his course from first to last, from the day he thus first spoke to the time when, at his instance, and by his influence, the matter was disposed of. He, too, was entrusted with petitions on this subject of slavery, and he thus spoke of what he had been charged to lay before the Senate.

“Mr. BUCHANAN said that, for two or three weeks past, there had been in his possession a memorial from the Caln Quarterly Meeting of the religious Society of Friends, in the State of Pennsylvania, requesting Congress to abolish slavery and the slave trade within the District of Columbia. This memorial was not a printed form; its language was not that in established use for such documents. It did not proceed from those desperate fanatics who have been endeavoring to disturb the security and peace of society in the Southern States, by the distribution of incendiary pamphlets and papers. Far different is the truth. It emanates from a society of Christians, whose object had always been to promote peace and good-will among men, and who have been the efficient and persevering friends of humanity in every clime. To their untiring efforts, more than to those of any other denomination of Christians, we owe the progress which has been made in abolishing the African slave trade throughout the world. This memorial was their testimony against the existence of slavery. This testimony they had borne for more than a century. Of the purity of their motives there can be no question.

“He had omitted to present this memorial at an earlier day, because he had thought that, on its presentation at the proper time, much good might be done. He had believed that, by private consultation, some resolution might be devised upon this exciting subject, which would obtain the unanimous vote of the Senate. If there was one man in that body not willing to adopt any proper measure to calm the troubled spirit of the South, he did not know him. This, in his judgment, would be the best mode of accomplishing the object which we all desire to accomplish. The proper course to attain this result was, in his opinion, to refer the subject, either to a select committee, or to the Committee for the District of Columbia. They would examine it in all its bearings; they would ascertain the views and feelings of individual Senators, and he had no doubt they would be able to recommend some measure to the Senate on which they could all unite. This would have a most happy effect upon the country. He had intended, upon presenting the memorial which he had in charge, to have suggested this mode of proceeding.

“The memorial which I have in my possession is entitled to the utmost respect, from the character of the memorialists. As I entirely dissent from the opinion they express, that we ought to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, I feel it to be due to them, to myself, and to the Senate, respectfully, but firmly, to state the reasons why I cannot advocate their views, or acquiesce in their conclusions.” (He then stated fully his reasons, and then proceeded.) “For one, whatever may be my opinions upon the abstract question of slavery (*and I am free to confess they are those of the people of Pennsylvania*), I shall never attempt to violate this fundamental compact.

“What, then, are the circumstances under which these memorials are now presented? A number of fanatics, led on by foreign incendiaries, have been scattering “arrows, firebrands, and death,” throughout the Southern States. The natural tendency of their publications is to produce dissatisfaction and revolt among the slaves, and to incite their wild passions to vengeance. All history, as well as the present condition of the slaves, proves that there can be no danger of the final result. But, in the meantime, what dreadful scenes may be enacted before such an insurrection, which would spare neither age nor sex, could be suppressed! What agony of mind must be suffered, especially by the gentler sex, in consequence of these publications! Many a mother clasps her infant to her bosom when she retires to rest, under dreadful apprehensions that she may be aroused from her slumbers by the savage yells of the slaves by whom she is surrounded. These are the works of the Abolitionists. That their motives may be honest, I do not doubt; but their zeal is without knowledge. The history of the human race presents numerous examples of ignorant enthusiasts, the purity of whose



intentions cannot be doubted, who have spread devastation and bloodshed over the face of the earth.

“These fanatics, instead of benefiting the slaves who are the objects of their regard, have inflicted serious injuries upon them. Self-preservation is the first law of nature. The master, for the sake of their wives and children, for the sake of all that is near and dear to them on earth, must tighten the reins of authority over their slaves. They must counteract the efforts of the Abolitionists. The slaves are denied many indulgences which their masters would otherwise grant. They must be kept in such a state of bondage as effectually to prevent their rising. These are the injurious effects produced by the Abolitionists upon the slave himself. Whilst, on the one hand, they render his condition miserable, by presenting to his mind vague notions of freedom never to be realized; on the other, they make it doubly miserable, by compelling the master to be severe, in order to prevent any attempts at insurrection. They thus render it impossible for the master to treat his slave according to the dictates of his heart and his feelings.

“Besides, do not the Abolitionists perceive that the spirit which is thus roused must protract to an indefinite period the emancipation of the slave? The necessary effect of their efforts is to render desperate those to whom the power of emancipation exclusively belongs. I believe most conscientiously, in whatever light this subject can be viewed, that the best interests of the slave require that the question should be left, where the Constitution has left it, to the slaveholding States themselves, without foreign interference. This being a true statement of the case, as applied to the States where slavery exists, what is now asked by these memorialists? That in this District, of ten miles square—a District carved out of two slaveholding States, and surrounded by them on all sides—slavery shall be abolished. What would be the effects of granting their request? You would thus erect a citadel in the very heart of these States, upon a territory which they have ceded to you for a far different purpose, from which Abolitionists and incendiaries could securely attack the peace and safety of their citizens. You establish a spot within the slaveholding States which would be a city of refuge for runaway slaves. You create, by law, a central point, from which trains of gunpowder may be securely laid, extending into the surrounding States, which, at any moment, may produce a fearful and destructive explosion. By passing such a law, you introduce the enemy into the very bosom of these two States, and afford him every opportunity to produce a servile insurrection. Is there any reasonable man who can, for one moment, suppose that Virginia and Maryland would have ceded the District of Columbia to the United States if they had entertained the slightest idea that Congress would ever use it for any such purpose? They ceded it for your use, for your convenience, and not for their own destruction. When slavery ceases to exist under the laws of Virginia and Maryland, then, and not till then, ought it to be abolished in the District of Columbia.

“Mr. B. said that, notwithstanding these were his opinions, he could not vote for the motion of the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. Calhoun) not to receive these memorials. He would not at present proceed to state his reasons, still hoping the Senate could yet agree upon some course which would prove satisfactory to all. With this view he moved that the whole subject be postponed.”—(*Register of Debates*, vol. xii. p. 82.)

In these views, Mr. Benton, also a moderate man on this subject, earnestly concurred; and the remarkable feature of all this was, that while Mr. Buchanan thus took ground decidedly with the North on one point—that is, the Right of Petition—he gave no discontent to the South, because the South saw in him there was throughout a constitutional moderation in the course he took that conciliated both sections. Mr. Preston, of South Carolina, Mr. Calhoun’s colleague, thus referred to Mr. Buchanan’s course:—

“Mr. Preston said, Do we demand anything here that we are not entitled to? There is not a Senator present that so believes. I feel, with the Senator from Missouri (Mr. Benton), the most respect for the talent, and integrity, the ability, boldness, and zeal, of the leading men of the North during the last summer. I thank them for checking the excitement there as far as they were able. I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania also, that he is found side by side with us in this crisis. That while the Senator from a slaveholding State sees no cause of unnecessary agitation—while he would have us be quiet, nor place our foot on the torch that is about to consume our dwelling, the Senator from the great and free State of Pennsylvania identifies himself with our feelings and interests, and sees as we do, all around, the materials of discord, disunion, and destruction.

“I invoke him, and all who think with him, to extinguish the fire which will wrap this country in flames. The Southern country is filled with alarm and discontent. Let us, by the rejection of this petition, remove, instead of increasing it. Let us check this wild crusade



while yet we may; and, for God's sake, let us meet with no political opposition in so doing. Adopt some measure by which we can obtain the security we are entitled to. Reject this petition. Public good and abstract right both call upon you to do so. Prevent this swollen and turbid torrent of fanaticism from overwhelming these halls. One pigmy rill has found its way here—let it be the last. I, at least, sir, will not aid in undermining our institutions. I will not fan the flame of fanaticism in producing the worst of consequences. Should I do so, I should prove recreant to my trust.”—(*Register of Debates*, p. 94.)

On the 11th of January, 1836, Mr. Buchanan presented the petition of the Quarterly Meeting of Friends, and moved “that the petition be read, but that the prayer of the memorialists be not acceded to.” On this motion a debate arose which lasted for many weeks; and it is agreeable to find what full justice was done by Southern Senators of that day to the Society of Friends and their gentle precepts, and how clear a discrimination they made, one and all, between the moderate and constitutional anti-slavery opinions of the Friends, and the extreme opinions of technical Abolitionists. Mr. Leigh, of Virginia, thus spoke:—

“The temper and language of these memorials are widely different. That from the Quakers does, indeed, represent slavery as unchristian and inhuman, as they would deprecate and remonstrate against war, however just and necessary, as unchristian and inhuman; but they evince no animosity against slaveholders; they manifest the same mild and peaceful spirit, the same good-will and brotherly love towards all men, which that Society have so signally at all times, and on all occasions, displayed in word and deed. They have been holding similar language for years; holding it in the slaveholding as well as the non-slaveholding States; addressing it to Congress; addressing it, in conversation, to their slaveholding neighbors in Virginia (as my colleague and I can testify), and in memorials to our Legislature; yet they have never given offence, provoked resentment, or excited alarm. Sensitive as we are supposed to be on this subject, the Quakers who have lived among us have found out the art of maintaining their opinions without offence; and the art consists simply in purifying their own hearts and language from the least taint of malignity. I cannot help wishing I could find some principle of discrimination, favorable to this memorial of the Quakers, on which I could think myself justified in giving it a different treatment from that which I have no hesitation in giving to the memorials from Ohio. One of these is from men; the other is signed by women only. That from the men is comparatively rare; they only reiterate their opinion that the holding of slave property, and the transfer of it by sale, as practised in this country, is alike detestable with the African slave trade, which has been declared piracy by law. But the memorial from the softer sex contains as much matter of offence, insult, and vituperation, applicable to all the slaveholding portions of their fellow-citizens, as could possibly have been put into a paper of the same compass. These ladies probably thought (or rather the person who prepared the memorial for them thought) that their sex would give them a title to indulgence. But, in my sense of things, their sex, instead of furnishing a motive for treating them with indulgence, is an aggravation of their fault. They have unsexed themselves. These memorialists of Ohio, male and female, it seems, are sorely afflicted with the cruel grievances our slaves endure from us, their ruthless masters; their souls are oppressed with the load of mortal sin which we incur by holding their fellow-creatures in bondage: and, while they profess sympathy and compassion for the slave, it is but too apparent that abhorrence and detestation of the slave-owner constitute the moving spirit that dictates their language and their conduct.”—(*Register of Debates*, p. 186.)

And on the same occasion, SILAS WRIGHT, a public man to whose memory all parties now unite in paying a tribute of respect, earnestly pressed upon the Senate the adoption of what he called “the liberal and patriotic proposition of his friend from Pennsylvania, Mr. Buchanan, which, he thought, was most eminently calculated to allay excitement everywhere, which could not be done by a political or geographical vote.” Mr. King, of Alabama, the late Vice-President of the United States (you will see that I am not quoting extreme or violent men, but moderate and conservative statesmen), on the 19th of January said, “that the magnanimous and patriotic stand taken by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Buchanan), was worthy of himself and of the great State he represented, and was an earnest to him of the disposition of that and other Northern States to arrest the course of deluded people in producing mischief here and elsewhere.” On the 12th of Febru-



ary, Mr. Buchanan distinctly said that he had never moved to reject a petition. His motion was to refuse to comply with the request thus respectfully made and thus respectfully received; but at a later day, and pending this debate, Mr. Buchanan had the proud satisfaction of being able to say that what he had done and said met with the approval of the conscientious and excellent men from whose opinions he had been compelled to dissent. He quoted a letter from some members of the Society of Friends, and it is interesting to observe how different was their tone of moderation from that of the fanatics now.

I can make only brief extracts, but they are worthy of attention and meditation, for they assert Northern doctrine and Northern sympathy, and opinions and views of constitutional right, which now are received doctrines all over the country. Well may Mr. Buchanan in his retirement, either with the prospect of the Presidency before him, or in uncertainty as to his election, looking back upon his past action, promise the country that the great object of his life is now, as it ever has been, to repress slavery agitation. Mark his words!—

Mr. Buchanan said it was not now his intention to repeat anything he had said on a former occasion in regard to the abolition of slavery in this District. The remarks which he had then made, after much reflection, still met his entire approbation. He would not now have alluded to them, were it not for the misapprehension which still appeared to prevail upon this floor, in regard to the state of Northern feeling on this subject. Those remarks had, he believed, been more extensively circulated throughout Pennsylvania than any which he had ever made upon any occasion. If they had been censured anywhere in that State, by any party, the fact was unknown to him. On the contrary he had strong reasons to believe they had been received with general approbation.

Mr. Buchanan said that he was not in the habit of using private letters to sustain any position which he might take upon this floor or elsewhere. He would say, however, that since he had presented the memorial, now the subject of consideration before the Senate, he had received another memorial of a similar character from the City of Philadelphia. This memorial had been transmitted to him by two gentlemen whose names and character would be the strongest guarantee for the truth of their assertions, did he feel himself at liberty to make them known to the Senate. He would not even have alluded to their letter, but it related to a public subject in which the country was deeply interested, and accompanied the memorial which they had requested him to present to the Senate. The following is an extract from this letter:—

“Although we have not the pleasure of thy acquaintance, permit us, on this occasion, to express our satisfaction with thy remarks in the Senate some weeks since, in which the opinion was forcibly sustained, that no sensible man at the North would advocate the right of Congress to interfere with the subject of slavery in the Slave States themselves. We are fully persuaded this is the fact in our neighborhood.

“In a pretty extensive acquaintance with the friends of abolition in this city, we unhesitatingly declare that we have never heard such an opinion advocated; and we defy our opponents to point out a man that has ever circulated any publication calculated to produce discord in the Southern States.

“But whilst we fully recognize this view, we are aware that the Constitution guarantees to us the right of memorializing Congress on any subject connected with the welfare of the District of Columbia; and we intend ever to exercise it in the spirit of charity and good feeling.”

Mr. Buchanan believed this statement to be true. Although all the people of Pennsylvania were opposed to slavery in the abstract, yet they would not sanction any attempts to excite the slaves of the Southern States to insurrection and bloodshed. Whilst they knew their own rights, and would maintain them, they never would invade the rights of others which had been secured by the Federal Constitution. He was proud to say this had always been the character and conduct of the State which he had in part the honor to represent in her relations with her sister States. Mr. Buchanan said he felt himself justified in declaring that Pennsylvania was perfectly sound upon this question. Abolitionists there may be in Pennsylvania, but it had never been his fate to meet a single one. If we have a man who desires by circulation of incendiary publications and pictures throughout the slaveholding States, to produce a servile insurrection and thus to abolish slavery, he knew him not. In the language of the letter he had just read, “whatever might be the case further North, he might defy any gentleman to point out a man in Pennsylvania who has ever circulated any publication calculated to produce discord in the Southern States.” He had heard within the last few days that emissaries were now travelling throughout Pennsylvania, for the purpose of propagating the doctrine of immediate abolition. He thought he might venture to predict that they would fail in their attempts.



534 Although he did not mean at present to discuss the general question, yet the Senator from South Carolina [Mr. Preston] must permit him to say that, in his remarks of yesterday, he had done much to dignify the cause of abolition, and to give its supporters a character which they did not deserve.

Mr. Buchanan was not so well able to judge what effect those remarks might produce on the South; but he protested against the accuracy of the statements which that gentleman had made in regard to the condition of Northern feeling on this subject. His information had been incorrect. If the gloomy coloring of the picture which he had presented could be considered anything but a fancy sketch, the South might believe that the time had arrived when it could be their duty to decide whether it was not necessary to dissolve this Union for the protection of their rights. Mr. Buchanan thought far otherwise. This crisis has not arrived, and he trusted never would arrive.

Let it once be understood that the sacred right of petition, and the cause of the abolitionists must rise or must fall together, and the consequences may be fatal. I would, therefore, warn Southern gentlemen to reflect seriously in what situation they place their friends to the North, by insisting that this petition shall not be received.

We have just as little right to interfere with slavery in the South, as we have to touch the right of petition.

The right of every citizen to worship his God according to the dictates of his own conscience, his right freely to speak, and freely to print and publish his thoughts to the world, and his right to petition the Government for a redress of grievances, are placed entirely beyond the control of the Congress of the United States, or either of its branches. There may they ever remain! These fundamental principles of liberty are companions. They rest upon the same foundation. They must stand or must fall together. They will be maintained so long as American liberty shall endure.

The present is a real controversy between liberty and power. In my humble judgment, it is far the most important question which has been before the Senate since I have had the honor of occupying a seat in this body. It is a contest between those, however unintentionally, who desire to abridge the right of the people, in asking their servants for a redress of grievances, and those who desire to leave it, as the Constitution left it, free as air. Petitions ought ever to find their way into the Senate without impediment; and I trust that the decision upon this question will result in the establishment of one of the dearest rights which a free people can enjoy. Now why should the Senator from South Carolina urge the motion which he has made? I wish I could persuade him to withdraw it. We of the North honestly believe, and I feel confident he will not doubt our sincerity, that we cannot vote for his motion without violating our duty to God, and to the country—without disregarding the oath which we have sworn to support the Constitution. This is not the condition of those who advocate his motion. It is not pretended that the Constitution imposes any obligation upon them to vote for this motion. With them it is a question of mere expediency; with us, one of constitutional duty. I ask, gentlemen of the South for their own sake, as well as for that of their friends in the North, to vote against this motion. It will place us all in a false position, where neither their sentiments nor ours will be properly understood.

The people of the North are justly jealous of their rights and liberties. Among these they hold the right of petition to be one of the most sacred character. I would say to the gentlemen of the South, why, then, will you array yourselves, without any necessity, against this right? You believe that we are much divided on the question of abolition. Why, then, will you introduce another element of discord amongst us, which may do your cause much harm, and which cannot possibly do it any good? When you possess an impregnable fortress, if you will defend it, why take shelter in an outwork, where defeat is certain? Why select the very weakest position—one on which you will yourselves present a divided front to the enemy, when it is in your power to choose one on which you and us can all unite? You will thus afford an opportunity to the abolitionists at the North to form a false issue with your friends. You place us in such a condition that we cannot defend you, without infringing the sacred right of petition. Do you not perceive that the question of abolition may thus be indissolubly connected, in public estimation, with a cause that we can never abandon. If the abolitionists themselves had been consulted, I will venture to assert, they ought to have advised the very course which has been adopted by their greatest enemies.

I repeat, too, that I intended to make as strong a motion in this case as the circumstances would justify. It is necessary that we should use every constitutional effort to suppress the agitation which now disturbs the land. This is necessary, as much for the happiness and future prospects of the slave, as for the security of the master. Before this storm began to rage, the laws in regard to slaves had been greatly ameliorated by the slaveholding States. They enjoyed many privileges which were unknown in former times. In some of the slave States prospective and gradual emancipation was publicly and seriously discussed. But now,



thanks to the efforts of the abolitionists, the slaves have been deprived of these privileges; and, whilst the integrity of the Union is endangered, their prospect of final emancipation is delayed to an indefinite period. To leave this question where the Constitution has left it, to the slaveholding States themselves, is equally dictated by a humane regard for the slaves, as well as for their masters.

Before I made the motion, now before the Senate, I deliberately and anxiously considered all these embarrassing difficulties. At the first, I was under the impression that the reference of this subject to a committee would be the wisest course. In view of all the difficulties, however, I changed my opinion; and I am now willing, most cheerfully, to assume all the responsibility which may rest upon me for having made this motion.

I might have moved to lay the memorial upon the table; but I did not believe that this would be doing that justice to the South which she has a right to demand at our hands. She is entitled to the strongest vote, upon the strongest proposition, which gentlemen can give, without violating their principles.

If the spirit of abolition had become so extensive and so formidable as some gentlemen suppose, we might justly be alarmed for the existence of this Union. Comparatively speaking, I believe it to be weak and powerless, though it is noisy. Without excitement, got up here or elsewhere, which may continue its existence for some time longer, it will pass away in a short period, like the other excitements which have disturbed the public mind, and are now almost forgotten.

And on the 9th of March, the fruit of all this was reached. The question being taken, "Shall the petition be received?" it was decided in the affirmative, by a vote of 36 to 10. Among those voting in the affirmative were Messrs. BENTON, BUCHANAN, CLAY, CLAYTON, CRITTENDEN, WEBSTER, and WRIGHT.\* Mr. Buchanan then, in justified triumph, said, and had a right to say, he rejoiced at the result.

Mr. Buchanan said: "I rejoice at the result of the vote which has this day been recorded. It will for ever secure to the citizens of this country the sacred right of petition. The question has now been finally settled by a decisive vote of the Senate. The memorial which I presented from a portion of the highly respectable Society of Friends, has been received by a triumphant majority. Another happy consequence of this vote is, that abolition is forever separated from the right of petition. The abolitionists will now never be able to connect their cause with the violation of a right so justly dear to the people. They must now stand alone. This is the very position in which every friend of the Union, both to the North and the South, ought to desire to see them placed." \* \* \* \* \*

Mr. Buchanan said: "This question of domestic slavery is the weak point in our institutions. Tariffs may be raised almost to prohibition, and then they may be reduced so as to yield no adequate protection to the manufacturer; our Union is sufficiently strong to endure the shock. Fierce political storms may arise, the moral elements of the country may be convulsed by the struggles of ambitious men for the highest honors of the government; the sunshine does not more certainly succeed the storm, than that all will again be peace. *Touch this question of slavery seriously—let it once be made manifest to the people of the South that they cannot live with us except in a state of continual apprehension and alarm for their wives and their children, for all that is near and dear to them upon the earth—and the Union is from that moment dissolved. It does not then become a question of expediency, but of self-preservation. It is a question brought home to the fireside, to the domestic circle, of every white man in the Southern States.* This day, this dark and gloomy day for the Republic, will, I most devoutly trust and believe, never arrive! Although in Pennsylvania we are all opposed to slavery in the abstract, yet we will never violate the constitutional compact which we have made with our sister States. Their rights will be held sacred by us. Under the Constitution it is their own question, and there let it remain."

When the question afterwards arose on the proposition to reject the prayer of the petition, and an attempt was made, by a side wind, to get rid of it, Mr. Buchanan voted in the negative. This was on the 10th of March, 1836. The subject again came up, and I am glad of the opportunity to notice that in the course of the debate which then ensued, the strongest tribute paid to Mr. Bu-

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\* Yeas—Messrs. Benton, Brown, Buchanan, Clay, Clayton, Crittenden, Davis, Ewing (of Ohio), Ewing (of Illinois), Golsborough, Grundy, Hendrick, Hill, Hubbard, Kent, King (of Alabama), King (of Georgia), Knight, Linn, McKean, Morris, Naudain, Niles, Prentiss, Robinson, Ruggles, Shepley, Southard, Swift, Tallmadge, Tipton, Tomlinson, Wall, Webster, Wright—36.



chanan, for his ability, his purity of purpose, and his sincerity, was paid to him by JOHN DAVIS, of Massachusetts. The question on the refusal to comply with the prayer of the petition, "to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia," for that was the subject before the Senate, was taken and decided by the overwhelming vote of 34 to 6. Northern as well as Southern men voting with the majority. Mr. Buchanan again voted with Benton, Clay, Crittenden, Ewing, of Ohio, and Silas Wright. Thus ended, through the efforts mainly of our Pennsylvania Statesman, this spasm of slavery agitation.

A month after, Mr. Benton congratulated the Senate, and well he might, that the abolition agitation seemed to have died out. On the 25th of April, 1836, Mr. Buchanan again had an opportunity of expressing to the Senate, on another question, the pleasure which he had in the approval of his Pennsylvania constituency.

A committee of the Society of Friends, composed, if I am not mistaken, of Dr. Joseph Parrish, William Wharton, and Joseph Foulke, men whose memory is affectionately cherished here in Philadelphia, brought to Washington a petition remonstrating against the admission of Arkansas into the Union, while a provision remained in her Constitution admitting slavery. Mr. Buchanan, in speaking of this memorial said, "that its language was perfectly respectful; *indeed*," said he, "*it could not be otherwise, considering the source from which it emanated. It breathed throughout the pure and Christian spirit which had always animated the Society of Friends; and, though he did not concur with them in opinion, their memorial was entitled to be received with great respect.*" He told them what his views were, and that in presenting their memorial, he should feel it his duty to state those views to the Senate. They were satisfied that he should pursue that course, and still continued their request that he should present the memorial. He did so with great pleasure, and told his colleagues that he hoped it might be received by the Senate with all the respect it so highly deserved.

Now this is one eventful chapter in the history of Mr. Buchanan's public life with reference to the slavery agitation; and, I beg it to be observed, how moderate, how, conservative, and yet how resolute this course of his was. On the bill to prevent the circulation of incendiary publications, Mr. Buchanan was unwilling to go to the extent which was suggested by Mr. Calhoun, but was willing, and did support, the bill which was reported by the committee on the subject. His words are these:—

Mr. Buchanan said he felt as reluctant as any man could feel to vote for any law interfering with the circulation, through the mails, of any publication whatever, no matter what might be its character. But if the slaves within any Southern State were in rebellion, or if a palpable and well-founded danger of such a rebellion existed, with his present convictions, should he refuse to prevent the circulation of publications tending to encourage or excite insurrection, he would consider himself an accomplice in their guilt. He entertained no doubt whatever, of the power of Congress to pass this bill, or of the propriety of exercising that power. He would not have voted for the bill which had been reported by the Senator from South Carolina [Mr. Calhoun], because he thought it a measure far beyond what was required by the necessity of the case. This bill, whilst it was sufficiently strong to correct the evil, would be confined in its operations to those States within which the danger existed.

As is well known, however, that bill failed. The danger in allowing the circulation of incendiary publications, intended and calculated to arouse the negro population, will not be denied; and I am free to say, and so will every moderate man in the North say, that in their nervous solicitude on that subject our brethren of the South were fully justified. The North itself recoiled from this incendiary crusade, and unless it be revived in Mrs. Stowe's new book, which is just published, on the eve of the presidential election, though discreetly shipped for market to England, there has been no circulation of incendiary documents since.\* The course of the Senate,

\* The nearest approach to any appeal of this sort I have been pained to see, is in speeches delivered and elaborately reported by my own fellow-citizens. One of them, speaking of the



I repeat, and public opinion, not then morbidly inflamed, settled this agitation. George Thomson, the English abolitionist, returned to his employers at home, after a fruitless mission. From 1836 to 1838, the country and Congress were allowed repose; and other questions, as I have said, of legitimate politics, occupied the attention of the nation, the currency and the sub-treasury being the engrossing topics. But in 1838 agitation presented itself in a new form, and from a new quarter—that is, it did not come in petitions from the North, but in what was supposed to be precautionary resolutions from the South. I am wrong, perhaps, in saying not in petitions from the North; for, if my memory serves me, the first movement was a memorial on the subject, presented from the General Assembly of Vermont. They were met, however, by an extreme movement from the South; and here, again, I beg it to be observed, that Mr. BUCHANAN assumed a constitutional and conservative ground, checking Southern as well as Northern ultraism.

Mr. CALHOUN, on the 27th of December, 1837, offered a series of six resolutions on the subject. On the third resolution an animated discussion arose, in which, as ever, Mr. Buchanan took a distinguished part. That resolution declared that the government of the Union was bound to give “*increased* stability and security to the domestic institutions of the States;” and that it was the duty of the government not only to resist all attempts by one portion of the Union to attack the domestic institutions of another, “*but to strengthen and uphold them.*”

Mr. Norvell, a Senator from Michigan, though long a resident of Philadelphia (for Pennsylvania then, as ever, was on the side of moderation), moved that so much of the resolutions of Mr. Calhoun as pledged this government to give “*increased*” stability to the domestic institutions of the States, and as pronounced it to be its duty to “*strengthen*” them, be erased from the resolutions. On this, an earnest debate began, and on the authoritative record of the debates I find on the 4th of January, 1838, this minute, which I quote *verbatim*:—

Mr. Preston, of S. O., inquired how the resolution would read were the amendment adopted.

Mr. Buchanan remarked, “*Exactly right;*” and then Mr. Calhoun announced his full assent to the amendment. (*Congressional Globe*, 2d sess. 25th Congress, App., p. 23.) And the change was made, and, with other modifications, all having the same end, the resolution was adopted, 31 to 11. It was in the debate on this resolution that these words of moderate wisdom were uttered.

Mr. Buchanan said:—

“This committee ought to be most carefully selected by the Senate. It should be composed of men whose opinions would command the greatest weight throughout the country. Everything like party politics should be banished from our deliberations on this subject. I should deem myself guilty of moral treason, if, on a question which may endanger the existence of the Union, I could permit my conduct to be influenced by the petty desire of obtaining a party triumph. Let the resolutions be framed in a most conciliatory spirit, and let them be clothed in language which shall shock the opinions of no Senator. Provided the substance be obtained, I care not for the form. Such resolutions, adopted by an almost unanimous vote, might exert the happiest influence. They mark a clear and broad line of separa-

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negroes of the South, in the absence of their masters, said: “In the absence of the whites, on the principle that when the cat is away the mice will play, *won't the niggers have fun?*” (Tremendous cheering.)—*Speech of the Hon. W. D. Kelley, at Spring Garden Hall, revised and reported in Cummings' Evening Bulletin, Sept. 13, 1856.* Another, Mr. Charles Gilpin, is thus reported in the *Bulletin* of September 20: Mr. Gilpin then *very humorously and felicitously laughed* at the threats of the South and Democracy that they would dissolve the Union if Fremont was elected. He declared that if the Union was destroyed the South had not pens enough, nor forts enough, nor men enough, to keep their cattle from running away [laughter], to say *nothing of the blood and anarchy which would follow on the uprising of an imbruted race like the slaves of the Southern States.*



tion between the friends of the Union on the one side, and the abolitionists on the other. They would free the question from the party politics of the day, and would rally all the friends of the Constitution everywhere in their support.

"The Middle and the Northern States are the field upon which this great battle must be fought. I fear not, I doubt not the result if senators from the South, where the people are united, would but consent to adopt the counsel of those who must bear the brunt of the contest."

On the 9th of January, 1838, Mr. Clay (Henry Clay, of Kentucky) offered a series of resolutions as substitutes, some of which were adopted on the next day, Mr. Buchanan voting with Clay, and Clayton, and Crittenden, and Rives, and Tallmadge, and White; and on one of which, or rather upon a modification suggested by Mr. Buchanan, when Mr. Webster intimated dissent—

Mr. Clay said he entirely concurred with Mr. Buchanan, and expressed his astonishment that Mr. Webster did not view the matter in the same light. It too was carried, 36 to 9. The history of these resolutions, of their modification and final adoption in the form I have stated in the previous part of these remarks, would be historically interesting, but I have not time for them now; my business is with the agency of our Pennsylvania statesman. On the 11th of January, 1838, just before the final action of the Senate, Mr. Buchanan thus replied to the objectors on all sides, ultraists of the North as well as of the South:—

He thought the debate had now become exceedingly dull. It had almost worn itself out, and was now dragging its slow length along. He would not, however, suffer it to close without making a few observations, in consequence of what had repeatedly fallen from the senator from South Carolina (Mr. Calhoun).

It had been often said, in the course of the debate, that these resolutions were intended as a platform, on which we of the North, who were disposed to sustain the constitutional rights of the South, might stand and defend ourselves against the attacks of the abolitionists. Now, for his part, he disclaimed the idea of having any such platform erected for him. We can sustain ourselves better without it. All we desire upon this question is "hands off." We know best how to fight our own battles.

These resolutions had emanated from the South; and he most fervently hoped that they might do some good in tranquillizing and soothing the feelings of the people there, and in convincing them that they had numerous friends in the North, who would stand by them in any emergency. He protested, however, against the idea that they were passed for the benefit of the North. Some commiseration (said Mr. Buchanan) has been expressed for our situation. It has been said that our intentions were very good, and that we would be willing to go further, if we dared to do so. Now, he protested against any such inference. He had always gone as far as his sense and justice dictated, and if there had not been an abolitionist in existence, he would have gone no further. He wanted no platform on which to stand save the Constitution of our country. What fanatic had there ever been in the North so mad as to assert that we had any right to attack slavery in the States where it exists? That principle had been settled by the first Congress; and that principle, so long as he held a seat in the Senate, he should maintain to the death. Now could any resolutions pass here which would make the case stronger? No, sir; we stand upon the Constitution alone; but we are always willing to vote for any measures within its pale which will satisfy the South that we are ever ready to maintain principles so long and so well established. These (said he) have been the motives of my conduct throughout upon these resolutions. They are a southern, and not a northern measure; intended for the benefit of the South, rather than the North. In the portion of the Union from which he came, we deprecate agitation and excitement from this source; and he, therefore, most devoutly trusted that this protracted debate was now about to terminate.

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"At the instance of many gentlemen, the resolution had been changed, re-changed, and modified, until he had become tired of the process. He had determined for himself to quit setting to every new partner that might offer. He would now consent to take the last edition of the resolution, as it had come from the hands of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. Walker), but he would not, for one, agree to any other changes. Much as he desired to gratify the South, he was not disposed to go any further. He should therefore vote against the amendment proposed by the senator from South Carolina" (Mr. Calhoun).



Mr. Calhoun replied, and thus the record ends:—

“Mr. Buchanan was very sorry that the Senator from South Carolina had misunderstood his remarks. He trusted, and believed, that his course upon this subject, from the first day he had taken his seat in the Senate until the present moment, had been such as to place him above all suspicion. He could not believe that any other Senator had fallen into the same mistake. The ardor of the gentleman’s feelings upon this subject, must have blinded his judgment.

“What he (Mr. Buchanan) had said, and what he meant to say was, that it had been repeatedly asserted by the gentleman himself, and by others, in the course of this debate, that these resolutions were intended as a platform for the friends of the South in the Northern States, on which they might stand and defend themselves against the assaults of the Abolitionists; and that we of the North would have gone further than we had done, to protect the rights of the South, had it not been from a dread of public opinion at home. He had also stated that some commiseration, on this account, had been expressed for our situation. Now, the Senator had entirely misapprehended the nature of this remark. The commiseration which I said had been expressed by himself and others, for our condition in the North, he understood directly the reverse of what my words imported, and had construed them into an expression of pity and commiseration, on my part, for the condition of the people of the South. Such an idea as that applying the term *pity* to that gallant people, had never entered my mind. They are far above it. I know them too well, and respect them too highly, to have ever thought of applying to them any such term. I am fully sensible that they are willing and able to defend their own rights, without assistance from any quarter. Pity for the South! I utterly disclaim having uttered any such sentiment.

“He (Mr. Buchanan) did not blame the Senator from South Carolina for having introduced these resolutions. Certainly not. Had he not voted for them, one and all, except that which related to the District of Columbia; and, instead of that one, he had voted for another on the same subject, which he solemnly believed would be productive of greater good? Now, what he had disclaimed, and what he meant to disclaim, was, that these resolutions were intended for the benefit of the friends of the Union in the North.

“They had not been brought forward by the North, but by the South, and hence it was fair to infer that their purpose was to satisfy and tranquillize public opinion in that portion of the Union. He had voted for them with pleasure under this belief; and he trusted that our friends in the South would now be convinced that we were ready to stand by them in the assertion and maintenance of all their constitutional rights over their slaves.

“Mr. B. said these resolutions could not aid him at home. There the battle had been already fought, and what part he had taken in it two years ago, was well known to every man in the country who had thought his humble career worthy of any observation. He was fully convinced that the protracted discussion of the Abolition question here, at this time, could do the friends of the Union in the North little, if any, good; he wished he were convinced that it would do them no harm. This was the great centre of agitation. When it was commenced here, its baneful influence must spread over the whole Union. Deeply impressed with the belief, he had for two years, when Abolition memorials were presented, uniformly voted in favor of such a disposition of them as would prevent useless and dangerous discussion upon this theatre. He hoped he could not now be misunderstood by the Senator from South Carolina.”

After some remarks from Messrs. Hubbard and Walker, Mr. Calhoun said—

“That, in compliance with the urgent wishes of his friends, rather than with his own judgment, he would consent to vote for the resolution as amended. It had undergone important modifications, making it out stronger than at first, but yet it was still very feeble, and not at all suited to the occasion.”

On taking the question to agree to the resolution, as modified in the following form:—

“Resolved, That any attempt of Congress to abolish slavery in any Territory of the United States in which it exists, would create serious alarm and just apprehension in the States sustaining that domestic institution; would be a violation of good faith towards the inhabitants of any such Territory, who have been permitted to settle and hold slaves therein; because the people of any such Territory have not asked for the abolition of slavery therein; and because, when any such Territory shall be admitted into the Union as a State, the people thereof will be entitled to decide that question exclusively for themselves.



"It was determined in the affirmative—yeas 35, nays 9, as follows:—

"Yeas—Messrs. Allen, Bayard, Benton, Black, Brown, Buchanan, Calhoun, Clay, of Alabama, Clay, of Kentucky, Crittenden, Cuthbert, Fulton, Grundy, Hubbard, King, Lumpkin, Lyon, Merri-  
 rick, Nicholas, Niles, Norvell, Pierce, Preston, Rives, Roan, Robinson, Sevier, Smith, of Con-  
 necticut, Strunge, Tipton, Walker, White, Williams, Wright, and Young—35.

"So the resolution, as amended, was agreed to."

I may interrupt the train of these remarks, confined, thus far, strictly to the slavery agitation question, by saying that Mr. Buchanan, on kindred topics, seemed to have the good or ill fortune of being the champion of those who respectfully petitioned the Federal Legislature. All can remember the actual or spurious excitement—for some people must always have something of the kind on hand—about the bloodhounds said to have been used, I think, by General Taylor in the Florida war. In February, 1840, Mr. Buchanan presented a memorial from the representatives of the religious Society of Friends in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware, and also fourteen memorials from Philadelphia, remonstrating against the employment of bloodhounds in the war against the Seminole Indians, and moved their reference. Western and Southern senators vehemently resisted this. Mr. Buchanan bore strong testimony to the high character of the memorialists, especially to the Society of Friends; and insisted, as he had done on other subjects, not only on their right to be heard, but their right to be satisfied. Even this expression of mistaken benevolence received at his hands full consideration. (*Congress. Globe*, 1839-40, p. 183.)

Again, at the same session, and I believe for the last time in the Senate, the irrita-  
 tion as to slavery was accidentally revived, and again, Mr. Buchanan taking the  
 lead, was it happily put to rest. On the 13th February, 1840, Mr. Clay presented  
 a petition for the abolition of slavery, and said he did it in deference to the right of  
 petition, which he admitted in full force. He thought the crisis of this unfortunate  
 agitation was passed. "Whether," he added, "the political uses which have since  
 been made of it may not revive it, and revive it in an imposing form, he was not  
 prepared to say." Our Pennsylvania statesman thus met and thus disposed of this  
 new form of folly, not offensively, but decisively and resolutely.

Mr. Buchanan said he did not rise to make a speech, but to submit a motion. Before he  
 did this, however, he would take leave to make a very brief explanation. Although he had  
 ever carefully avoided to speak of his own past conduct in the Senate in terms which might  
 appear like self-commendation, yet, upon the present occasion, he deemed it necessary to refer  
 to his former course upon the subject of abolition.

In the session of 1835-6, said Mr. Buchanan, when an alarming excitement prevailed on  
 this subject throughout a large portion of the country, I took a decided stand against the  
 Abolitionists. I then presented a memorial from the Caln Quarterly meeting of the highly  
 respectable religious society of Friends in Pennsylvania, asking Congress to abolish slavery  
 in the District of Columbia; and at the time of its presentation I declared that upon its  
 reception, I should immediately move that the prayer of the memorialists be rejected. This  
 memorial was received by a vote of 36 to 10; and my motion to reject the prayer of it pre-  
 vailed, with but six dissenting voices. Since this decision, the Senate had adopted a practice  
 which I think has proved eminently beneficial, because it has afforded us peace and quiet upon  
 this subject. The memorial is presented, objection is made to its reception, and a motion to  
 lay the question of reception upon the table is then immediately made and adopted. This  
 precludes all debate and all agitation.

Now, said Mr. Buchanan, in consequence of my conduct here throughout that session, I  
 have borne the brunt of the Abolitionists at home. I agree with the Senator from Kentucky  
 that the danger has passed away, at least in Pennsylvania. The crisis is now over; and the  
 fanaticism which threatened to invade the constitutional rights of the South, and to dissolve  
 the Union, has been nearly extinguished.

The battle has been fought, where it must ever be fought, not in the South, but in the North.  
 It is we of the North who must ever sustain the shock in such a contest. Under these circum-  
 stances, I appeal most solemnly to Senators from the slaveholding States, whether they  
 ought not to be governed in a great degree by our advice, as to the mode in which these  
 Abolition petitions shall be treated. It is impossible, after all which has passed, that they



can doubt our devotion to the constitutional rights of the South. Let me assure them, then, that our greatest danger is from agitation here—excitement is the element in which abolition lives, and moves, and has its being. A flame kindled in the capital would soon pervade the Union. Let a question now be raised upon the abstract right of petition—let the enemies of abolition in this body divide upon this question, as they probably would, and they will jeopard the great cause, to the maintenance of which they are all devoted, in this most unprofitable strife. The discussion of the abolition question here can do no possible good, and may do much positive harm. When did fanaticism ever yield to the voice of reason? Let it alone, and it will soon burn out for want of the fuel on which it feeds.

Deeply and solemnly impressed with a conviction of the truth of these sentiments, and for the purpose of arresting this debate, I make the accustomed motion, which cannot be debated, that the question on the reception of this memorial be laid upon the table.

Mr. Brown here interposed, in the most earnest manner, and urged Mr. Buchanan to withdraw his motion, to afford him an opportunity of answering remarks, which he considered personal to himself. After much solicitation from him, Mr. Buchanan reluctantly consented to withdraw his motion, at the same time declaring that he would renew it on the very first opportunity after the Senator had made his remarks.

On motion of Mr. Buchanan—so says the record—the matter was finally laid on the table, and thus ended in the Senate, while he was a member of it—and, as I have said more than once, by his direct agency, this slavery agitation.

Here, I say, the agitation ended. I have carefully scrutinized the action of Congress, and I find that, from this time forward, there was a lull, a most happy repose, and that the matter, except as it incidentally or illustratively was referred to, never arose again during the remnant of Mr. Buchanan's career as a legislator. Still, as I desire to make the retrospect complete, I will refer to the only other occasions, so far as I have been able to trace them, on which Mr. Buchanan ever opened his lips on the subject.

In the month of February, 1842, at the XXVIIth Congress, Mr. Clay, then in a state of irritation, whether natural or not I do not pause to inquire, at Mr. Tyler's course, proposed an amendment to the Constitution authorizing a bare majority of all the members of each house to pass a bill into a law, notwithstanding a President's objections. To this change of organic law, Mr. Buchanan was earnestly opposed, and, looking back at this distance of time calmly to the question, we may all agree, Democrats, Americans, Republicans, Whigs, if there be any left, that he was right and Mr. Clay was wrong. I do not believe there is a sane man in the United States, unless it be some lobby member at Washington intent on plunder, who would touch this conservative feature of the Constitution. In Mr. Buchanan's speech on the 2d February, 1842, he thus illustrated his main argument, and thus referred to Slavery Agitation: mark, fellow citizens, his words of simple, earnest, unexaggerated eloquence, and, mark too his forecast of the evil day of sectional controversy, and fierce, obtrusive fanaticism which at last has dawned, if dawn there can be said to be in that sky of brass which threatens to cover us.

Mr. Buchanan said, "Let me suppose another case of a much more dangerous character. In the Southern States, which compose the weaker portion of the Union, a species of property exists which is now attracting the attention of the whole civilized world. These States never would have become parties to the Union, had not their rights in this property been secured by the Federal Constitution. Foreign and domestic fanatics—some from the belief that they are doing God's service, and others from a desire to divide and destroy this Glorious Republic—have conspired to emancipate the Southern slaves. On this question, the people of the South, beyond the limits of their own States, stand alone and unsupported by any power on earth, except that of the Northern Democracy. These fanatical philanthropists are now conducting a crusade over the whole world, and are endeavoring to concentrate the public opinion of all mankind against this right of property. Suppose they should ever influence a majority in both houses of Congress to pass a law, not to abolish this property—for that would be too palpable a violation of the Constitution—but to render it of no value, under the letter—but against the spirit of some one of the powers granted: will any lover of his country say that the President ought not to possess the power of arresting such an act by his veto, until the solemn decision of the people should be known on this question, involving life or death to the



Union? We of the non-slaveholding States, entered this Union upon the express condition that this property should be protected. Whatever may be our own private opinions in regard to Slavery in the abstract, ought we to hazard all the blessings of our own free institutions—our Union and our Strength—in such a crusade against our brethren of the South? Ought we to jeopard every political right we hold dear for the sake of enabling these fanatics to invade Southern rights, and render that fair portion of our common inheritance a scene of servile war, rapine and murder? Shall we apply the torch to the magnificent temple of human liberty which our forefathers reared at the price of their blood and treasure, and permit all we hold dear to perish in the conflagration? I trust not.

“It is possible that at some future day the majority in Congress may attempt, *by indirect means*, to emancipate the slaves of the South. There is no knowing through what channel the ever active spirit of fanaticism may seek to accomplish its object. The attempts may be made through the taxing power, or some other express power granted by the Constitution; God only knows how it may be made. It is hard to say what means fanaticism may not adopt to accomplish its purpose. Do we feel so secure, in this hour of peril from abroad and peril at home, as to be willing to prostrate any of the barriers which the Constitution has reared against hasty and dangerous legislation? No, never was the value of the veto power more manifest than at the present moment. For the weaker portion of the Union, whose Constitutional rights are now assailed with such violence, to think of abandoning this safeguard would be almost suicidal. It is my solemn conviction, that there never was a wiser or more beautiful adaptation of theory to practice in any government than that which requires a majority of two-thirds in both Houses of Congress to pass an act returned by the President with his objections, under all the high responsibilities which he owes to his country. Ours is a glorious Constitution. Let us venerate it, let us stand by it as the work of great and good men, unsurpassed in the history of any age or nation. Let us not assail it rashly with our invading hands, but honor it as the fountain of our prosperity and power. Let us protect it as the only system of government which could have rendered us what we are in half a century, and enabled us to take the front rank among the nations of the earth. In my opinion it is the only form of government which can preserve the blessings of liberty and prosperity to the people, and at the same time secure the rights and sovereignty of the States. The great mass of the people are unwilling that it shall be changed.”

I say there is painful forecast in this speech; and I say besides, that the ‘indirect means of emancipation,’ which Mr. Buchanan foresaw fourteen years ago, seem now about to be used. I do not venture to say what Mr. Fremont will do, but I have a right to say what his leading friends not only wish him to do, but think he will do. Every one knows what Mr. Giddings, and Mr. Stevens, and Mr. Lovejoy, wish him to do; but I find the written expression of what a leading and sagacious abolitionist anticipates from Mr. Fremont’s election, in the following remarkable letter from the Hon. John P. Hale, to a German meeting in New York, written since Fremont’s nomination. He scorns the poor pretexts of Kansas and free territory at a distance, and boldly avows that but for abolition or emancipation *everywhere*, the movement would have little favor from him. It is a Sabbath day letter.

WASHINGTON, Sunday, Aug. 10, 1856.

GENTLEMEN: I have received your very polite note of the 6th inst., inviting me to attend a mass meeting at the Tabernacle on the evening of the 21st inst. I regret that it is not in my power to be present with you on that occasion, but my engagements will not permit me. I rejoice in your movement. I have faith and hope in progress. I look forward hopefully for the day when the word *slave shall be without practical meaning in this*, or the Eastern Continent; when universal man shall stand erect as God intended he should, calling no one lord or master save the common Father of us all, and recognizing no Government save that which is founded on the principles of Eternal Justice and universal rights of humanity. *If I did not believe that the election of FREMONT and DAYTON would be a step in that direction, the movement would receive little sympathy from me.*

With much respect, gentlemen, I am your friend,

JOHN P. HALE.

This ‘step in that direction,’ is very much like the ‘indirect means’ which Mr. Buchanan foretold in 1842. ‘Amelioration’ by constitutional means, by the tranquil operation of those mysterious processes which in the Providence of God settle all such questions and remove all such evils, Mr. Buchanan has always looked to with



hope and confidence, not the less firm because the means are not visible to his or any other mortal eye. All other emancipation, or abolition, or interference, he regards as full of evil, and fraught with danger to the cause of Republican Institutions, and to the Constitution and the Union.

"Public opinion," said Mr. Buchanan in the Senate in 1844, and these were, I believe, the last words he ever uttered on the subject: "Public opinion was gradually accomplishing a happy result in Maryland, Virginia, Kentucky, Missouri, and other States, when the process was arrested by the mad interference of the Abolitionists. A measure having directly in view the gradual abolition of slavery came within one vote, if my memory serves me, of passing the House of Delegates of Virginia, shortly before the abolition excitement began. There was then in that State a powerful, influential, and growing party in favor of gradual emancipation, and they were animated to exertion by the brightest hopes of success; but the interference of fanatics from abroad has so effectually turned back the tide of public opinion that no individual would now venture to offer such a proposition. The efforts of the Abolitionists, whether so intended or not, have long postponed the day of emancipation." —*App. to Congress. Globe*, 1844, p. 722.

These last words were words of sorrow, but of wisdom and truth.

Now this, fellow-citizens, is the full record of Mr. Buchanan's legislative life; this the report of every word which, as a Pennsylvania Senator, he ever uttered on the question of slavery agitation in the States, the District of Columbia, or the Territories. I have carefully collated it. I have accurately stated it, and I appeal to every candid and fair minded man, North or South if his letter of acceptance to the Cincinnati Convention is not the fit and logical conclusion from all he had said and thought before; if there is not full assurance in all this that the promise of repose will be kept. In 1845, he retired from legislative life and entered Mr. Polk's cabinet. With the measures of 1850, he had no direct connection, being a private citizen at his home at Wheatland. With the legislation of 1854, and the repeal of the Missouri line, or the Kansas bill, he had nothing whatever to do, being abroad on public duty at a foreign court. What he thought of it, how and why he acquiesced in it, may be inferred from what he said in a private letter to a friend, and which is singularly demonstrative of that conservative spirit of reasonable acquiescence, of caution, of forbearance, of gentle judgment, and yet resolute and intelligent patriotism which I have endeavored to show is the characteristic of his mind. Thus Mr. Buchanan wrote to a friend from London on the 28th of December, 1855:—

"The question has been settled by Congress, and this settlement should be inflexibly maintained. The Missouri Compromise is gone, and gone forever. But no assault should be made upon those Democrats who maintained it, provided they are now willing in good faith to maintain the settlement as it exists. Such an understanding is wise and just in itself.

"It is well known how I labored in company with Southern men to have this line extended to the Pacific Ocean. But it has departed. The time for it has passed away, and I verily believe that the best—nay, the only—mode now left for putting down the fanatical and reckless spirit of Abolition at the North is to adhere to the existing settlement without the slightest thought or appearance of wavering, and without regarding any storm which may be raised against it."

And now, men of Pennsylvania—lovers of the union and the Constitution—citizens of the Middle States, of that central cluster of republican sovereignties whose loyalty to the Constitution has never wavered, of Pennsylvania, and Maryland, and Delaware, and New Jersey, I, as one of the humblest of your fellow-citizens, appeal to your sober judgment and your honest hearts and ask you why with this consistent record before you you should hesitate, on what part of it can you rest a doubt that Mr. Buchanan will make a safe, and moderate, and National President of the United States? Does not this record show that the great principle of his political action has been moderation, consistent, conservative, dignified moderation. Wiser men than I have thought so; ultra men shrink from him because he is moderate. On the 7th of



June 1856, that eminent public man whose written words of political history furnish the staple of so much criticism on the action of the South to the Republican orators, thus wrote from Cincinnati on the very spot where the dreadful platform was built and Mr. Buchanan's nomination was made—I mean Colonel Benton.

“The nomination of Mr. Buchanan for the Presidency determines my course. I consider him the safest chance for preserving the peace of the country, now greatly endangered both at home and abroad; and believing him to be the best chance for peace, I hold it to be the duty of those who are in favor of that object to assist in his election, and for one I shall do so in a public capacity if invested with one, and as a private citizen if not.”

Who shall say that words like these, not the effusions of ultraism, or enthusiasm, or pro-slavery fanaticism—for we all know Mr. Fremont's Democratic father-in-law has none of this about him—but of deliberate, perhaps reluctant preference, are not worthy of earnest meditation by every man who wishes to determine for himself who, for the safety and repose of the country, should be the next Chief Magistrate of the Nation? Nor is this all—for, in conclusion, I am seeking the authority of moderate and not of extreme men. Listen, fellow-citizens of the North, to another voice of gentle and patriotic counsel.

“If,” said Mr. Van Buren in a letter lately written, every word of which is worthy of attentive study, “if the confederacy shall prove strong enough to withstand these torrents of bitter waters, it will afford the best evidence that the love of union is as deeply impressed upon the American heart as its most sanguine friends have imagined it to be. I see good grounds for hope, that such may be the happy issue out of our present alarming condition, in the prospect of Mr. Buchanan's election. He is neither an untried man, or one of ordinary stamp. He has for a long time been favorably known to the public service, and comes before the country with a character already formed, and a mind thoroughly trained in the school of experience. In regard to the future action of such a man, his constituents are not left to conjecture and hope, but may form positive opinions. He has established a foreign reputation, in regard to which he cannot fail to be solicitous. He has, with characteristic good sense, relieved himself from the imputation of being influenced by a desire to conciliate any special or partial interest, with a view to a re-election, and his acts from misconstructions, which the suspicion of being so influenced might engender. That a man with such antecedents, and occupying such a position, acting in a matter of sufficient interest to attract the attention of the world, and in the presence of a free and intelligent people, among whom he was reared and expects to spend the evening of his life, can fail to perform his entire duty, when the path that leads to it is so plain, that ‘the wayfaring man, though a fool, could not err therein,’ is a consummation that I am very certain can never be realized.”

These are the words of Northern statesmen. Have you ever paused to inquire—do the abolition orators ever condescend to tell you that the extreme men of another latitude look coldly on our Pennsylvania statesman? When Mr. Sumner's wounds and wrongs are dragged into political discussion—when Mr. Anson Burlingame goes to the top of the Alleghany Mountains, and comes back again with new venom and new rhetoric to assail Mr. Buchanan's character, exactly as if Mr. Buchanan's hand had committed the outrage on Mr. Sumner's person, do they tell you, what is the truth, written, and spoken, and printed, that the violent men of the South recorded their votes against Mr. Buchanan at Cincinnati—that the wholesome reaction caused by the violence in the Senate strengthened, at the Convention, the cause of our Pennsylvania Statesman; nay, do they not meanly conceal from you the fact, while they are ready enough to quote his words of rashness, that, on more than one occasion, Mr. Brooks, of South Carolina, has gone out of his way to say, that he wished it to be understood “that Mr. Buchanan was neither his first nor his second choice;” and that he “does not include him on his muster-roll with Pierce, of New Hampshire, Douglas, of Illinois, or Toucey, of Connecticut.” All this is kept from you by the dexterous rhetoric of Republican leaders. Nay, more; when these orators, and the affiliated presses which sustain them, rail about the Ostend Conference and “the Robber's Plea,” as they style what is attributed to Mr. Buchanan, they take care to conceal the fact that Mr. Soule, the parent and stimulator of the Conference,



whatever it was, went home from Cincinnati a disappointed man, and said, on his return to New Orleans, in a public speech, that he *was* disappointed, that he went to Cincinnati "to urge certain views, and to give utterance to certain hopes, but the result crowned other wishes and other expectations."

These, fellow citizens of the North, are the impostures that are palmed upon you, and this the fraud which, by a simple reference to Mr. Buchanan's record, I have endeavored to expose. How far I have done it you must judge. To your sober judgment I confide it.

In no spirit of asperity or unkindness to living human being—in no exaggeration have I consciously spoken. I have avoided any allusion to the awful dangers before us, to the union of the States. They may or they may not exist and be at hand. The abolition party laughs at this danger, and many of those who have the same preference as I have, think there is none. I wish I could think so; but whether I do or not, whether I am right or wrong in my fears and misgivings, I have, in this appeal to the conservative judgment of the Middle States, abstained carefully from alluding to them. As resolutely have I endeavored to avoid personal reference to Mr. Fremont. His private affairs, his religious opinions, his marriage ceremonial, the baptism of his little children, and other matters so trivial as almost to provoke laughter, have been indecently paraded to the world by his indiscreet friends, and I have neither time nor taste for such insignificant details.\* I have no great faith or interest in travellers' stories, and I do not care who married him, or where his children were baptized.

*Extract No. 1.*

Col. Fremont's heavy, waving, dark hair, sprinkled slightly with white, parts naturally in the middle, and he wears a full beard, after the dictates of nature, and the practice of the early Christians. To this protection he attributes in a great degree the preservation of his teeth, which are perfect, amid the extremes of temperature to which he has been subjected, and of his face from the frost. Some time before the Philadelphia Convention, a number of wiseacres recommended to Colonel Fremont that he should shave off his beard and comb his hair differently, as he would thus remove one objection to his nomination. His reply was worthy of Jackson: "If the support of the whole New York delegation depended upon my doing such a thing," said he, "the only effect it could have upon me would be, that I should wear my beard as it is, and part my hair a little wider than I do now."

*Extract No. 2.*

During his expeditions, Col. Fremont always rode on a wooden saddle-tree, without leather or other covering. On one occasion, he had a leg and foot badly frozen. The toe-nails came off; but, a thing unusual, it is said, in such cases, they afterwards grew out again.

*Extract No. 3.*

"WASHINGTON CITY, July 12, 1856.

"The following children of J. Charles and Jessie Benton Fremont have been baptized in the Church of the Parish of the Epiphany, Washington, D. C.—their baptisms being recorded in the register of said parish:—

"1848, Aug. 15, Elizabeth McDowell Benton Fremont.

"1848, Aug. 15, Benton Fremont.

"1853, Dec. 28, John Charles Fremont.

"1855, Aug. 1, Francis Preston Fremont.

"As none were baptized in a house, *but all were brought to the church*, the order of the Protestant Episcopal Church for 'the Ministration of Public Baptism of Infants,' was that which was used.

"J. W. FRENCH,  
"Rector of the Parish of the Epiphany,  
"Washington, D. C."

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\* Extracts from Greeley's Life of Fremont, entered according to the act of Congress in the Clerk's Office for the Southern district of New York, by Greeley and McElrath.



One other word, my friends and fellow-citizens, and I have done. It is a word to and for Pennsylvanians. It is an appeal to the spirit and heart of Pennsylvania, if she has them. Years ago, on a widely different occasion, I was compelled to say that the defect of our Pennsylvania character was a habit of mutual and self disparagement. We were not true to ourselves and each other. Disloyalty to our State has hung like a chilly vapor upon the soil. Pennsylvanians have had a poor chance at home. It is a truth which strikes the eye on every page of our history, and there was shrewd sense in the remark of a sagacious stranger, once resident amongst us, that Pennsylvania and her public men reminded him of boys running behind a carriage in the street; all active, all anxious, all at the top of their speed; but the moment one more active than the rest gained the seat and distanced his competitors, there was a chorus of "cut behind," and down he was apt to come. Shall this reproach, this vigorous though homely illustration, again be verified? Shall Pennsylvania, that for seventy years has been voting for Virginians, and New Yorkers, and Kentuckians, and Tennesseans, now turn her back on the first Pennsylvanian ever nominated for the Presidency, and vote for one who, whatever was his birthplace, or wherever his home is now, is a stranger to our soil? Shall second or third rate Yankee orators, or lecturers, or adventurers come here and tell us our duty? Shall Wall Street and the New York press dictate terms to Pennsylvania? These are questions which the spirit of Pennsylvania must answer.

I am a Philadelphia man, born and bred in the metropolis of my State, which has honored me and confided in me. I have a loyal Pennsylvania heart throbbing within me, for all the fame and all the honor that belong to me and mine were won in Pennsylvania. Among the honors which Pennsylvania wears is her act of 1780, providing for the gradual abolition of slavery within her limits. To that act, as the Chief Magistrate of this commonwealth, is affixed the name of one who was near and dear to me, and, to the great principles of that act I and every true Pennsylvanian steadfastly adhere, because it contains no word of wrong to others, but all of duty to ourselves. It is to the principles of that act to which Mr. Buchanan adhered when in the Senate of the United States in 1836, he said "his principles as to slavery were those of Pennsylvania." That great act of constitutional abolition with all its generous concessions, providing that the wayfaring citizen of the South might, with his servants, sojourn for a limited time in Pennsylvania, continued the law until 1847, and then her legislature repealed that portion of it which did this poor justice to the South. "This repeal," says Colonel Benton in his historical work (vol. ii. p. 774) "was against the comity due to states united under a common head, against moral and social duty, against high national policy, against the spirit in which the Constitution was made, against her whole previous conduct for sixty years, and injurious and irritating to the people of the South," and this repeal, which Mr. Fremont's father-in-law thus denounces, bears the signature as Speaker of the Senate, of the present Chairman of the Fremont Executive Committee, and as Speaker of the House, of a candidate for Assembly on the Fremont ticket of Philadelphia.

I appeal to the loyal heart of Pennsylvania and the Middle States to save the country from the fanatical abolition which has always done wrong to us, and which never has done Pennsylvania good.







